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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Secretary  
 FROM: INR - Harold H. Saunders *for*

Human Rights at Grenada

Discussions on the human rights issue could enliven what promises to be an otherwise uneventful OAS General Assembly in Grenada. Several chiefs of state of Southern Cone countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) are sufficiently concerned about US policy to have considered coordinating their responses at a summit meeting prior to the OASGA, and these nations may yet caucus at the Foreign Minister level in Grenada before your arrival.

We thought you might find helpful our analysis of how Latin American leaders, especially those who have expressed dissatisfaction, perceive the human rights situation and US policy.

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Cast of Characters

Discussions on human rights will probably reveal two general groups of participants:

Supporters--Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Jamaica, and Trinidad. These are countries with reasonably good, if not exemplary, human rights records, whose leaders have publicly voiced support for Carter administration policies. Venezuela, Costa Rica, and the Caribbeans in particular are liable to be outspoken advocates of human rights observance in the hemisphere. Nonetheless, they will avoid arguing the US case to the point of taking sides against their Latin

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- 2 -

neighbors. Moreover, they harbor reservations about the means that the US should employ in pursuit of its goals. All, for instance, oppose the US application of human rights criteria in the Inter-American Development Bank (Harkin Amendment), and Presidents Perez of Venezuela and Lopez of Colombia have cautioned US officials about using excessive pressure on the Argentine Government.

Public Critics--Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Uruguay. All have human rights problems and have been criticized and/or subjected to sanctions by the US. Most of your human rights dialogue will probably be with representatives of these nations, and we have, therefore, concentrated on presenting their perceptions in the paragraphs that follow. None of these countries has much to gain in Grenada by an acrimonious confrontation over human rights, and most have indicated that they want no part of a blatantly anti-US bloc response to US policies. Rather, you can expect an earnestness on their part to state their own case clearly and strongly and hear directly from you what they can expect from the US.

#### Uncertainty About US Policy

The concern and anxiety that some Foreign Ministers will display is partially attributable to their uncertainty about the specifics of US policy. All are aware of the renewed US emphasis on human rights considerations, and even the more cynical hemispheric analysts have been largely disabused of the notion that it is nothing more than a rhetorical ploy to outmaneuver the Soviets or to curry domestic favor. Specifically, however, the Latin Foreign Ministers will want to know:

- To what lengths will the US go to secure human rights compliance, particularly with regard to the application of economic sanctions either through international financial institutions or trade measures?
- Will the US continue to impose sanctions on Latin American human rights violators while excusing governments in other areas on the grounds that the latter are crucial to US national security? Latins are particularly sensitive to the implication that the US is

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- 3 -

willing to tolerate human rights abuses when its own national security is involved, but unwilling to tolerate such abuses when the national security of other nations (domestic subversion) is involved.

--Is the US seriously interested in expanding the role of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC)? This is not a popular initiative among Latins, even with countries that have comparatively good human rights records, because all fear that they may one day become the target of investigation. At the last OASGA in Santiago, there was some concern about whether enough Latin support could be mustered to block a Chilean initiative to weaken the IAHRC. Reports of strong Brazilian and Uruguayan pressure on Paraguay's Stroessner to persuade him to reject an IAHRC visit provide recent evidence of sensitivity to the commission's work.

#### Perceived Moderation

Because they are either uncertain about US policy or fear its implications, Latins carefully scrutinize the comments of US officials, seeking policy indicators. Pointing to the statements of Assistant Secretary Todman and Human Rights Coordinator Derian and to President Carter's OAS speech, many of the officials you will meet have indicated either publicly or privately that they perceive a trend toward moderation in the US stance. As Julio Carasales, Argentina's Ambassador to the OAS, told the press on May 14:

"If we analyze the statements and actions of the US Government,...we can clearly see... a modification in the last few weeks, perhaps not as to objectives, but manner. Apparently the categoric statements have been abandoned and...US officials now prefer to adopt methods more in accordance with traditional diplomacy."

When such statements are made by spokesmen for countries like Argentina, they are probably inspired as much by hope as by conviction. Nonetheless, the notion that the US has backed down somewhat on human rights has wide currency in Latin America, and your interlocutors will treat your remarks as a test of the accuracy of that perception.

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- 4 -

Non-Intervention and National Security

Whenever the subject of human rights comes up, you will almost inevitably encounter Latin emphasis on the principle of non-intervention. US criticism of and imposition of sanctions for human rights excesses have consistently met charges of US interference in the domestic affairs of the nation involved. At some point in Grenada, the Latins may choose to make a strong restatement of their views on non-intervention part of the OASGA record.

Insistence on this point is more than a convenient diplomatic device to the Latins for two reasons:

- The discrepancy in economic, political, and military might between the US and Latin America as a whole, let alone between the US and individual countries, is so overwhelming that demanding strict US adherence to non-intervention is one of the few mechanisms available to the Latins for warding off what they see as US domination. In recent years, they have viewed the OAS in this light, i.e., as an institution for restraining US power and potential interference in hemispheric affairs.
- Non-intervention with respect to human rights is viewed as especially critical because of the perceived link between human rights considerations and national security. Military and government leaders in the Southern Cone and other countries tend to view human rights violations as a lamentable but almost inevitable facet of efforts to contain subversion. Thus, US approaches on human rights impinge directly on national security concerns and are considered all the more objectionable. General Julio Vadora, Commander-in-Chief of the Uruguayan army, put it this way:

"Uruguay...is struggling against... subversion and is being attacked by those who think that at this crucial point of the struggle, human rights can prevail over something as fundamental as state security-- that is to say, the very existence of the country."

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- 5 -

### Would-be Friends

The attitude of Southern Cone military leaders on the national security/human rights question is complicated by their self-image as friends of the US engaged in an anti-Communist struggle worthy of US support. Many officers view their counterterrorist efforts as literally a war against a global, Soviet-sponsored attack on the "Western, Christian, democratic way of life" with which they identify. Viewing the US as the standard bearer of the Free World, they believe that their fight serves US interests, and they interpret US human rights criticism as evidence of weakness in the face of the Communist threat. This view, and a resulting ambivalence toward the US, is particularly characteristic of military officers who have for many years heard their US counterparts emphasize the virtues of anti-Communism.

Since the most severe critics of US human rights policy are military leaders obsessed with anti-Communism, they may broach the question of human rights indirectly through a discussion of terrorism and hemispheric security. Tactically, from their standpoint, framing the issue in this manner would put the best possible light on their own case.

### The Cuban Connection

Cuban-US relations will not be a paramount concern of the Latins at Grenada, but, viewed within the human rights context, recent Cuban-US initiatives looking toward normalized relations are nettlesome to those irritated by the US stance on human rights. Several of the governments represented in Grenada have battled terrorist organizations encouraged and, in some cases, trained and financed by Castro. Leaders of those governments are concerned about whether the US will insist that Havana meet the same human rights standards that are being applied to their own countries. They hold Cuba partially responsible for the violence in their countries, and their sense of being abandoned by the US will grow if Castro is not forced to account for the political prisoners in Cuban prisons.

### The Economic Link

A recent comment by Peru's Foreign Minister, Jose de la Puente, suggests that you might be confronted by a formulation of the human rights issue designed to justify

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- 6 -

Latin demands for increased US development assistance:

"Human rights encompass not only man's right to reject offenses to his person or his family, but also his right to shelter and to a much higher standard of living than in the past."

A somewhat more complicated rationale might also be advanced at Grenada to arrive at the same conclusion, i.e., that US human rights policy obligates the US to increase economic aid to Latin America:

- Human rights violations often result from efforts to combat subversion.
- Subversion spreads most rapidly in deprived and/or inequitable socio-economic settings.
- Therefore, the way to inhibit subversion and its attendant human rights abuses is to promote economic development on a massive scale.

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Concurrences: ARA/LA - GLister  
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